A DIRECTORY TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

Wherein severall Considerations, Cautions and Advises are set downe for the perfecting of the Saints, and for the completing of them in the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

1 THES. 3. 10.

Praying exceedingly that wee might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

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A DIRECTORY To Christian Perfection.

MATTH. 5. Ver. 48.

Bee yee therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

A Malicious Christian and a courteous Cynicke, are expressions equally including contradiction, yet notwithstanding it is too manifest that thousands that honour themselves with the name of Christians, that dishonour God, and by their workes deny their very name; for if the least injury be offered them either in word or in deed, though in passion, how doe they foame and rage, like the troubled Sea, while they are revenged of the injury: But our Saviour here doth abundantly condemne and give rules to the contrary, from verse 43. to the end of the Chapter. A briefe exposition whereof shall serve both for the prosecution of the point, and introduction to the Text. In the 43. verse our Saviour sayes, *That you have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy:* our Saviour does not say that ever it was said so; for there is not any place in Scripture where wee are commanded to hate our enemy; and there are three things wherein their glosse is faulty.

First is, that they restraine the word *Neighbour*, to one of their own kindred or Nation, which our Saviour fully confutes in the tenth of *Luke* in the parable of the good Samaritan.

Secondly, they leave out, *as thy selfe.*

Thirdly, they put in, *thou shalt hate thine enemy*; whereas there is nothing in the Scripture for it, but many places against it: *Exodus* the 23. ver. 4, 5. *If thou meetest thine enemies Oxe or his Asse going astray, thou shalt surely bring it backe to him againe. If thou seest the Asse of him that hateth thee lying under his burden & wouldest forbeare to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.*

him. And whereas some say it was to be meant of an *Israelite*, if he be an enemy, but not of those of other Nations, but that they might hate them; the contrary is evident, *Deut.* 10. ver. 19. *Love yee therefore the Strangers, for yee were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

Use. The use of this is, That every one should read the Word of God, for if he onely heares the Word and searches not the Scripture, he shall heare that many things are said in the Word of God, which are no where there to be found, but divers times the cleane contrary.

Argu: So the first argument against revenge is that from the *Alpha* and beginning of *Genesis*, to the *Omega* and Amen of the *Revelations*; there is not one syllable to warrant us in such practises, but they are diametrically opposite to the doctrine of the Gospel, as you have it in the next verse; *But I say unto you*, as if Christ should say, whatsoever thoughts your own corruption suggests unto you, or whatsoever men shall say unto you it matters not, they are likely enough to blow the least sparke of contention into a flame, they haply will tell you that if you beare one injury you invite another. *But I say unto you love your enemies*, besides there is an *Emphasis* in the words, *I and you*; for it hath the same force to move us to love our enemies, *Matth.* 18. ver. 33. He that hath loved us and gave himselfe for us when wee were his enemies, may he not justly expect and command from us that wee should love our enemies, that wee should forgive an hundred pence when he commands us so to doe that hath forgiven us ten thousand talents. But to the further exposition of the following words, wee are to love our enemies, be they never so many wee must love them all, and be they never so much ones enemies, for here is no limitation put either in respect of their number or enmity, or in respect of our love; it is not said how much wee should love them, to shew that wee should love them without measure.

Resp. Now the reason why *love your enemies* is put first, is because that this must have an influence upon all the rest, wee must blesse them that curse us, doe good to them that hate us, upon this very ground, and from this principle, because wee love them.

But if our enemies curse us, then wee are not to content our selves with a bare inward love to them, but wee must shew our love by our outward expressions; and as our enemies encrease in the manifestations of their enmity, so wee must encrease in the manifestations of our love, and wee must not onely not curse againe, or be silent, and neither blesse nor curse, but wee must blesse them that curse us, nor is it set downe how much, how often, nor when wee must blesse, that wee might put no limits to our blessing in any of these respects: and as before it is observed concerning our enemies, be they never so many, and never so much our enemies, you ought to love them; for the same observations may runne thorough all the rest of the branches of this precept, nor doth our Saviour wish us to reprove those that curse us, but to blesse them.

First, Because reproofes at such a time are very unseasonable; for doubtlesse there is a time to reprove.

Secondly,

Secondly, Generally becauſe reproofes at ſuch times when people are curſing of us, are a kinde of revenge taken of them, eſpecially, if it be before others, for wee lay open their ſhame.

Thirdly, Becauſe this is the mildeſt, the ſecreteſt, and lovingeſt way of reproofe; for I remember the rule is given that one ſhould not, if one heares one ſpeake a word of Latine wrong, tell him that he pronounces it not as it ſhould be pronounced, much leſſe to tell him that he is an Ignorant man, but ſpeedily to take ſome occaſion to ſpeake that word right; ſo here, if thine enemy ſpeake falſe Chriſtian language, thy mildeſt way to ſhew him his errour, is by ſpeaking thoſe words right which he hath ſpoke wrong; for by thy bleſſing him thou doeſt in a milde manner ſhew that he ſhould have bleſſed thee.

The next branch is, that wee ſhould *doe good to them that hate us*, many are willing to give good words, but they will not doe any good deeds to their enemies, they will ſerve God of that which coſt them nought; but in the Originall it is not doe good to them that hate you, but doe well; to ſhew us that if wee doe our enemy good, yet if wee doe it in a churliſh and ſcornfull manner, wee doe not obſerve this commandement: But if thine enemy ſhall have blocked up this way, becauſe he ſcornes to receive, or by reaſon of his perſecution hath diſabled thee to beſtow any temporall courteſie upon him, then take another way, and doe him that courteſie which he cannot reject; for though one cannot give a man money who will not receive it, yet one may pray, and ones prayers may be powerfull to doe our enemies good whether they will or no, ſo that thou canſt never be ſo impoveriſht by perſecution, but thou art worth a prayer; nor thine enemy can hardly be ſo obſtinate, but thy prayers may faſten bleſſings on him, doe thine enemy as much good as thou canſt, and what thou canſt not doe, deſire God to doe for him. It follows, that *yee may be the Children of your Father.*

Firſt it is not meant as if wee could love our enemies before wee were Gods children, or that this is the way to get adoption or regeneration, for he calls God their Father when he wiſhes them to doe thus that they may be his children; therefore the meaning may be thus: Firſt, that you may be, *id eſt*, that you may be knowne to be both to your ſelves and others; as it is ſaid, *Wee are juſtified by works, id eſt*, our juſtification is knowne to our ſelves and others by workes; or ſo that you may be children, is meant, that ſince two wayes wee are the children of God by adoption and ſanctification; in reſpect of ſanctification wee may have the image of God renewed more and more in us, and ſo in a qualified ſenſe may be ſaid more to be Gods children, and in that ſenſe wee may attaine to be more the children of God, *id eſt*, more like him.

Secondly, None can be the children of God unleſſe they love their enemies.

Thirdly, That every one ſhould ſtrive both to be and to know himſelfe to be the childe of God.

Fourthly, That no man by nature is the childe of God, ſince no man by

by nature can or does love his enemy, as it follows, *which is in Heaven.*

First, Wee can never love our enemies so long as wee are no more then the children of our earthly father.

Secondly, That it is an heavenly thing to love ones enemies, and therefore *ex diametro* an hellish thing to hate ones friends, and therefore to hate Gods people.

First, Because they are our friends.

Secondly, They are heavenly.

Thirdly, This is the first Motive to perswade to love, &c. And as it followes; *For he makes his Sunne to arise.*

First, This is that second Motive to the duty, *id est*, Gods Example, and it stands thus; If God who is greater then you does bestow greater blessings upon those that are greater enemies, and between whom and him there is a greater distance, how much more should you love, &c?

Secondly, The Sunne doth not arise of it selfe, that knows not what it does, nor is it of necessitie that the Sunne should arise; of necessitie, it is in respect of the Sunne, not in respect of God, for he makes it to arise, so that the Sunne cannot choose but arise, but God might choose whether he would make it arise.

Thirdly, These common blessings come not by chance as well as not by necessitie, it is by Gods providence that wee enjoy them.

Fourthly, It shews the continuall concurrence and power of God with naturall causes, it is not like a Clocke which when it is once wound up will goe of it selfe by the weight, but as a pen that writes not without the continuall guidance of the Writer; so God did not at the first create the World, Sunne, &c. and so without his actuall concurrence to every particular act enable them to doe it, so that the Sunne did not arise at the first moment of its creation more immediately by the power and providence of God, then it does now, this advances Gods goodnesse; for as one that hath setled maintenance upon an Hospitall for the poore, it argues not so much patience in him, to suffer the men there if they abuse him to receive their setled stipend, as it does for him daily to feed them with his own hand, and to put money into one of their hands, while the other is listed up against him.

Fifthly, Or may not, he make it, be taken in this sense? that all the creatures of God are enemies to the wicked; the earth will not beare them, but open her mouth and swallow them, the fire will not warme them, but consume them, the Sunne will not give light unto them, as it did onee in Egypt, while they had light in Goshen, but God, as it were, *venuente sole*, doth make it arise upon the good and the bad; it shews the great power of God, that not onely the things on earth, but all the creatures in heaven and earth obey him, he that can make the Sunne arise, what can he not doe. *Neh.* 9. 6. As it follows; *His Sunne to arise.*

First, *A fortiori*, it is a Motive to us to doe good to our enemies.

Reas. First, Because that which wee give or bestow on them in respect of God, wee have no right to, wee are but his Stewards, and what have wee

wee that wee have not received; wee have the possession of all those things wee have, but not the disposing of them: in respect of the poore to give them almes is charity, in respect of God it is justice. But you see here the Sunne is called *his Sunne*, he hath a full title to it: if he therefore gives that which is his own, and is Lord of, much more should wee deliver that, of which wee are onely Stewards, when he that is the Lord commands us.

Secondly, Consider what he gives; it is his Sunne the greatest of all temporall blessings in the world, for wee might longer live without food or rayment, then without the benefit of the Sunne; for without his heat all things would immediately freeze to death: nay, not onely by giving the wicked the benefit of the Sunne, they enjoy that heat which is necessary for life, but they enjoy the light of the Sunne, which is a thing of ornament and pleasure, to make their life comfortable, *Eccle.* 11. 7. Therefore if God gives the wicked things of ornament, much more give your enemy bread, *Rom.* 12. 20. No man not onely cannot, but doth not offer to lay claime to the Sunne: and as it follows, *on the good and the bad*: some will say, how can it be otherwise, for if the Sunne shines upon the good, how can it but shine upon the bad also, since they are in one Kingdome, in one Towne, in one house? but God is not necessitated to bestow this mercy upon the bad, though he bestowes it upon the good; For *de facto* God did make it darke in Egypt when it was light for three dayes in Goshen, though they were of the same Kingdome; the cloud gave light to the *Israelites* in their March, and at the same time was darknesse to the *Egyptians*, Exod. 14. 19, 20. Besides, God can strike all wicked men with blindnesse, so that the Sunne shall be in respect of his light, as if it was not to them, and he might strike them with such a burning feaver as he threatens, *Deut.* 28. 22. that for its heat the Sunne should be worse to them, then if it was not, and thousand other wayes knowne to the Lord.

Secondly, Wee see that by common and temporall blessings, the good are not distinguished from the bad.

Thirdly, It followes that wicked and unjust men are Gods enemies, and curse God, hate God, persecute God, and despitefully use him, or else it would not follow from this example of Gods dealing with wicked men that wee should love our enemies, &c. For one might say, it is true, God makes his Sunne to shine upon the bad and unjust, but though indeed they be Gods enemies, yet they doe not hate him, curse, &c. as mine doe me.

Thirdly, That God may be said to blesse, and doe good to those that are bad and unjust, *Deut.* 10. 17. *Acts* 14. 17. And as it followes; *He sendeth raine.*

First, God bestowes not one but many blessings upon the wicked, he doth not onely make the Sunne to arise, but sends also the raine upon them; nay by bestowing this second blessing, he takes off that inconvenience which otherwise would follow upon the enjoyment of the first, nay they doe helpe mutually one another; for the raine cooles the heat of the

the Sunne, and the Sunne warmes the coolenesse of the raine, and both together make the earth fruitfull: from hence wee may learne.

First, To doe great and many benefits to our enemies.

Secondly, Not to doe them such courtesies that wee know will bring mischiefes upon them, and to doe them good in one thing, on purpose to doe them hurt in another.

Thirdly, Wee should doe good to those that doe not onely thanke us for courtesies, but attribute it to others, for God does so, he makes his Sunne to shine, and his raine to fall, not onely upon those that are so bad as not to be thankfull for them, but are so exceeding unjust as not to account God the Author of them. The observations concerning Gods making the Sunne to arise, &c. *Mutatis mutandis*, may agree to this latter part of the verse; this may also be observed, that God doth not onely give temporall blessings to those that aske and come for them, but he sends his mercies home to their very doores; for the clouds that arise from the Sea, or other places, he causes his winds to carry them to their habitations. Besides, this may be observed, that one reason why our Saviour instances in these blessings rather then in others, may be, not onely the reasons before, but this also, that wee might never want a Motive to our doing good to our enemies; for whether it raines, or shines, wee have either the instance of Gods making his Sunne to shine, or his raine to fall upon wicked men; as it followes, *upon the just and unjust.*

First, It is not set downe here as contradistinguished, as if there were some bad that were not unjust, and some unjust that were not bad, nor is it meant God makes his Sunne to arise on the bad, and sends his raine upon the unjust, bestowes some kinde of these blessings upon some wicked, and the other kinde upon other wicked men, but he bestowes both upon all; as before it is not meant wee should love our enemies, but not love those that curse us, or blesse those that cursed us, but not blesse those that hate us; but as when God commands us to blesse them that curse us, and does not say, doe good to them that curse you, it is because blessing is directly opposed to cursing; and so it is more likely to make him that curses see his errour, because contraries being placed one by another, make each other more apparent, as it is before shewen, and as it followes; *for if yee love them that love you:* The former argument was from the example of Allmighty God, whom all confesse in all things to doe well; there he brings an argument from them whom all condemne, and the argument stands thus; you all desire and expect to be rewarded for your workes, but none of you thinke that the Publicanes shall have any reward, therefore neither you, if you love them that onely love you, for so doe they.

Secondly, It is good to make use of that evill opinion wee have of others, as a Motive to our selves to be better.

Thirdly, That the wickedest man may have something good in him, but nothing perfect, and as it followes, *What reward have yee?* Christ doth not set it downe positively, that they have no reward, but by way

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of Question to shew them that it is not onely his judgement, but their owne, for he appeales to their owne consciences, and it shewes the manifestnesse of the truth, since selfe-love doth cast such a mist before our eyes when wee are to judge of things concerning our selves, that except the truth doth shine very bright wee cannot behold it; it is not said, what great reward, but what reward, to shew them that they should be so farre from expecting everlasting life, that they cannot expect any reward at all.

Thirdly, It is not said, what reward shall yee have, but what have yee to shew that they are not to expect so much as a temporall reward for loving their friends.

Fourthly, They have temporall blessings as Motives to obedience, but none by way of reward for obedience; for it is not said, what blessings, but what reward have you; for if one say of your righteousnesse you doe, doe not the Publicans the same? one may say of your blessings, have not the Publicans the same? Doe not even the Publicans the same? The Publicans were such as used to receive custome, tribute-money, and other taxes, and were men very odious to the Jewes, both for their injustice and oppression of them, and they were generally Heathens, because the Jewes did abhorre to have any hand in the oppressing of their owne Nation; nay, our Saviour joynes them with Harlots, Sinners, Heathens; and if you salute your brethren onely, the word translated *salute*, signifies to kisse and embrace; and our Saviour doth signifie by it all outward expressions of love.

Secondly, By *Brethren* is meant our neare kindred and acquaintance.

Thirdly, This word *onely* is to be referred as well to the former verse as to this; and the observations *mutatis mutandis* upon that may be applyed to this.

In the handling of these words, I shall shew these things.

First, How wee must be perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

Secondly, In the pressing of Christian perfection, three things I shall set downe. First, Severall Considerations. Secondly, Severall Cautions. Thirdly, Severall Rules or Advises.

Before I come to the Exposition of the words, to shew how wee must be perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect, I must remove an Objection that quarrells against the perfection of this rule of perfection; *viz.* First, That this rule is too high: Secondly, It is dangerous: Thirdly, That it is imperfect and too short.

First, It is too high, for what man or Angel is able to be as perfect as God, it is not compatible to any created nature, for that being finite cannot possibly be capable of infinite perfection, for his glorious Name is exalted above all blessing and praise, *Neh.* 9. 5. And the Lord is faine to dwell in thicke darknesse, and thereby doth *connivere radiis suæ gloriæ*, and the Angells also doe cover their faces with their wings, or else they were not able to behold his glory, their understanding would be dazled

if therefore they are not able to behold his glory in its full ſtrength and vigour, how much leſſe are they able to attaine it? how much leſſe able are wee that are ſinfull duſt and aſhes, who are not able to behold (that which is darkneſſe in compariſon of God) the Sunne, to be perfect as God is perfect?

Firſt, I anſwer, That wee are here commanded to attaine the ſame kinde, not the ſame degrees of perfection: it is not be as perfect as your Father, but be perfect as your Father; wee are to goe in the ſame ſteps, though not *æquis paſſibus*, his example is the coppy wee ſhould write by, though it be impoſſible to write ſo curious an hand, yet wee may write the ſame words, &c.

Secondly, It is an advantage to have ſo perfect a copy ſet us, though wee cannot attaine it, for who is there that learnes to write, that blames the exactneſſe of the copy he writes by? And he that taketh aime and ſhooteth at the higheſt point or zenith of the Heaven, will ſhoote higher with the ſame ſtrength then he that ſhoots at a levell, or any other point beſides.

Thirdly, It addes to the holineſſe of any action that wee deſire in that action to be like to God, and upon that ground to deſire to be holy becauſe God is holy.

Secondly, You may ſay, it is a dangerous rule, for wee may not ſtrive to be like unto God in many things, wee may not deſire our own glory as he doth; *Adam* deſiring to be like him, it was his ſinne and his fall. I anſwer to that, that there are two kinds of perfections in God communicable and incommunicable, incommunicable are called thoſe, not which the creature cannot have, but which the creature ought not to have, as to doe all things for its own glory; for a creature may doe all things for its own glory, but it ought not ſo to doe, not onely becauſe it is folly in the creature to doe ſo, for glory is a thing of ornament, and man is a poore creature that wants things neceſſary, and it was folly for man to buy Jewells to adorne him, while he was ready to ſtarve for want of garments to cloath him; but it is becauſe it is incommunicable to the creature, that is, God and the creature cannot doe things for their owne glory without thwarting one another, for if man doe things for his owne glory, then it muſt needs follow that he doth it not for the glory of God, and ſo thwarts the end that God propoſeth to himſelfe, and to all creatures, *viz.* his own glory: ſo that here when our Saviour commands us to be perfect as he is perfect, it is meant that wee ſhould endeavour to attaine thoſe perfections which our having doth not hinder his having of them, as holineſſe, patience, wiſdome, &c. for our holineſſe be it never ſo great makes not God leſſe holy, but the more wee ſeeke our own glory, the more wee rob God of his.

Secondly, I anſwer, that all theſe kinds of perfections which are incommunicable, are rather reſultancies and conſequences of perfection, then perfections, for it is more proper to ſay, that becauſe God is infinitely perfect, therefore all the heaven and earth ſhould praiſe him; then

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to say because heaven and earth doth praise him, therefore he is infinitely perfect; for the praises which are given unto him are not the causes of his perfection, but his infinite perfections are the causes of his praise.

Thirdly, It may be objected, that it is an imperfect rule, for it seemes to come short.

First, In respect of our relations, as of husband, wife, childe, subject, how can wee have an example of God in these particulars, since he is not capable of these relations?

Secondly, In respect of duties, we are to pray, to worship, to heare the Word.

Thirdly, In respect of graces, repentance, faith, hope, patience in afflictions; all these are below him.

I answer; First, That though wee have not an example of any of these, from God considered in himselfe, yet wee have of most of these from Christ who was God as well as Man, for wee have an example, how to carry our selves in afflictions, of obedience both to God and man, and those relations which our Saviour left us no example of in a temporall way, yet in a mysticall way he hath, though he was not a Magistrate, nor an husband in a temporall way, yet in a mysticall way he is both Lord and husband to the Church.

Lastly, Those graces which suppose sinne as repentance doth, yet our Saviour hath left us an example of those graces, which if wee obtaine they will certainly produce repentance in us, and enable to carry our selves in all duties and in all our relations as becometh Christians, so that as one that should teach us to write, and set us exact Copies, wee should not quarrell with him and say, that he hath been a defective Schoole-Master, because that some of those words that afterwards wee have occasion to write, were never in those Copies that he set us; sufficient it is for him to vindicate himselfe and say, that I have taught you all those Letters, and all those severall joynings, which will spell and make up that word that you are to write whatsoever it be; so Christ hath left us an example of those graces, which are able to spell and make up any duty, or grace wee stand in need of, there are the ingredients, of which all compositions may be made up, if wee follow Christ in our love to God, and our hatred to sinne, our godly sorrow for sinne will necessarily follow, and be made up of these two ingredients, though Christ for his part had never any occasion to use such a composition for himselfe, having never need of that Physicke, and so I come, the objection being removed, to the prosecuting of the point, to shew how wee should be perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.

First, In respect of the kinds of perfections, they must be spirituall and divine: carnall, corporall, or civill or morall perfections are too low for a Christian to looke at, especially to make it his businesse, or the marke he shoots at: morall vertues were the highest perfections of the Heathens, but alas morall vertues transforme us not, they change not our natures,

but onely gild our rottenneſſe; though one be never ſo good a natured man, as they call it, if one has not the divine nature, one is but a tame Devill, for one is his childe; if ones nature be not ſanctified, and our perſon juſtified, and ſo become the childe of God by regeneration and adoption, and the moſt excellenteſt act that is meerely morally vertuous is ſinne, and cannot pleaſe God: let me give a Simile to make this evident; A great Emperour commands his Empreſſe to come to him, as *Ahaſuerus* did Queene *Vaſthi*; his commands not prevailing, he entreats her, after that ſends his Letters full of love and importunity, ſends Embaſſadors after Embaſſadors, and leaſt thoſe ſhould fayle, ſends her many gifts very rich and magnificent, and thus he continues weeke, moneth, yeare after yeare, yet ſhee utterly refuſes, but after her rejecting and ſlighting all theſe wayes of love from the Emperour her husband, there comes a baſe ſlave, from whoſe company her husband had eſpecially forewarn'd her, becauſe ſhee had formerly committed folly with him, and diſhonoured both her ſelfe and the Emperour; this adulterer and traytor ſpeaks but halfe a word to her to goe, and ſhee preſently without delay and with joy goes, when ſhee perceives it would pleaſe the ſlave: What doe you thinke now, doe you thinke the Emperour will be pleaſed with her comming upon thoſe termes? this is the caſe of all men that are no more then morally vertuous, God perſwades us to be juſt, and to defraud no man, he entreats us, ſends the Embaſſadors the Miniſters unto us, giveth us mercy upon mercy, ſends us his Word, his Epiſtles from Heaven, line upon line to perſwade us to doe juſtice, or to be temperate, not we, for his ſake we will doe nothing: the world comes, the world which is a ſlave to Satan, for he is a Prince and Ruler of the darkneſſe of this world, the world with which wee have committed ſo often ſpirituall whoredome, and againſt which God hath ſo often and ſeriouſly forewarned us, now onely upon a ſuppoſition that we ſhould pleaſe the world if we are juſt or temperate; we will be intemperately temperate, if I may ſo ſay, even to macerate our bodies with faſting, for a good looke of the world, wee doe indeed in being temperate or juſt, doe that which God commands, but farre are wee from pleaſing him, conſidering the grounds from which we doe it, for can he be pleaſed that we ſhould doe more for a good looke of the world, then we would for all the wayes of love that he tooke with us, nay indeed never to doe any one action for his ſake, nay but before his face at the ſame time when we refuſe all his entreaties, &c. to doe it at the firſt word of the world, therefore morall vertues, conſidering the ground upon which they were done are ſinnes before God, therefore let us learne not to be vertuous as Philoſophers were vertuous, but holy as God is holy.

Secondly, The perfections of God are infinite, ſo muſt ours as farre as it is poſſible for creatures to attaine, our deſires of holineſſe muſt be without limits, we muſt not ſet bounds to our holineſſe, ſaying, hitherto ſhalt thou goe and no further, but we muſt alwayes hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſſe.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, God hath all perfections, or rather is all perfections: so we must adde to our faith vertue, to vertue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, &c. We must receive from Christ grace for grace, as a childe receives from the father limbe from limbe, part for part, the same parts that the fathers body hath, the childs hath also, the same for number, figure and position, though neither for strength, nor bigneſſe: and as God is the act of all possible absolute perfections, either in degree or in kinde, so wee should endeavour to have those perfections that a creature of that kinde is capable of.

Fourthly, As the perfections of God are both inseparable from God and from themselves, so should ours be also; our wisedome must be holy, our holineſſe innocent, our wisedome zealous, and our zeale wise; for we must not conceive that some of Gods actions are holy, others wise, but all are all, his wisdome is holy, just, and good; his justice, holy, good and wise, and every attribute is as inseparably united to all the rest of his attributes, as any of them are to his Essence: as if there were an hundred Sunnes shining at once in the Firmament, one could not say that one of these Sunnes shined in this part of the ayre, and another in that, but the light of every one of them would be in every point of the ayre; nor could you possibly take away the light of one of the Sunnes, and leave the rest, unleſſe you could take away the Sunne it selfe: so it is in Gods perfection, but thy glorious Name is exalted above all knowledge, above all blessing, and above all praise.

Many men will be zealous, but without knowledge; others will be wise, but without zeale, and so their wisedomes come to be no better then carnall, sensuall, and devilliſh: the former zeale was that zeale of the Jewes, *Rom.* 10. 2. The other wisedome was the wisedome of *Pilate*; both of them crucified Christ.

Lastly, For I doe not intend to be large in these parallels, but make hast to presse the great point of Christian perfection; wee must be perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, notwithstanding all hinderances or provocations to the contrary; though God by his wisedome governes and orders all things, not a spire of grasse, or blade of wheat growes but by him, 1 *Cor.* 15. 38. Not a sparrow falls on the ground, nor an haire from our head, but by his providence, not a Lilly is cloathed in the seild, nor a fowle in the ayre is fed but by him, yet notwithstanding such an innumerable number of creatures, are both in respect of their essence and operations, nay even in respect of the smalleſt circumstances of either, are acted, governed, and ordered continually by his providence; yet he doth no leſſe know, love, and enjoy himselfe, then he did from all eternity, before there was any creature for his providence to watch over: so should wee doe, wee should not have our thoughts leſſe fixed on God, orour love leſſe fervent; our communion with God should be neither remitted or intermitted by the imployments in the world; Mothers that have their little Children to looke to, should be like the Angells which all wayes behold the face of our Father which is in Heaven, *Mat.* 18. 11.

But

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But I come (as I promised) to the great businesse of this Treatise, *viz.* The pressing of Christian perfection, which is almost forgotten, and nothing left of it but the forme of godlinesse; and I shall referre the whole Discourse to these three heads.

First, Severall Considerations.
Secondly, Severall Cautions.
Thirdly, Severall Advises.

Considerations.

1. Consi. Let us consider what the word of God speaks in this matter, 1 *Cor.* 10. 31. *Whether yee eate or drinke, or whatsoever yee doe, doe all to the glory of God:* doe wee live up to the meaning of these words? let us consider a little of it, and see the meaning of the words.

First, Wee are to glorifie God in all our actions, that is, wee ought in the secret of our hearts to admire and adore him, to have high thoughts of him; and sweet thoughts of him, and to expresse it fully, wee ought to honour him as God, *Rom.* 1. Which he blames the Gentiles for nor doing, *That knowing him as God, did not honour him as God:* to honour him but as wee would honour the holiest man in the world, nay the highest Angel in Heaven is nothing, and as great derogation to his glory, as to give his glory to them; for to give the honour due unto God to a creature, and to give that is due unto a creature unto God, are equally vitious: but let us deale freely and openly with our owne soules, doe wee doe so much as that which if we did no more wee were guilty of that great sinne of the Heathens, which the Apostle in the forenamed place doth condemne, doe we honour God as much as we doe honour an Angel, or an holy man? let us but aske our owne consciences, and they will tell us. Would wee doe that in the presence of either of them as wee doe in the presence of God; nay of a childe that is come to that understanding to distinguish between good and evill.

Secondly, By these words wee are enjoyned that our words, actions, gestures, and all our carriages should be such, as may be suitable and fit to raise up those high thoughts of God in others as wee our selves have; for instance; in prayer, we ought not onely our selves to admire and adore our good and glorious God, but so to lift him up and hold forth his excellencies by our very expressions, pronunciations and gestures, that they may be such as may be suitable to our inward admirings of him: but fit to beget the same thoughts in all that heare us; our loves should be like a flame that takes hold of all that comes neere it.

Thirdly, Wee should, as much as in us lies, doe all our actions, and speake all our words with an actuall intention by them to edifie others, and to cause them to glorifie the Lord. Now how farre wee come short of this, wee may even be confounded with shame to speake of it. The second place that sets downe Christian perfection, *Phil.* 3. 20. *Wee should have our conversation in Heaven*; wee should thinke with our selves how we should live when we come thither, or how those live that are there, or one would live that should come from thence to live on earth againe; how feelingly

feelingly would they speake of God? how fervently would they praise him? how would their songs of praise be all flames of love? how are they continually taken up with thoughts of admiration of the excellencies of God, of the love of God; let us not dally with our selves or God, but consider with our selves whether we live in any measure sutable to such a life. But to proceed, let us consider another place, *Ephe.* 3. 19. To say of such an one, that he is a godly man, the holy Spirit of God is in him, that he is full of the Holy Ghost, that he is filled with all the fulnesse of God; if one went upon such relations and expressions to see him of whom they were spoken, doubtlesse one should come with great expectations to meet with one that was wholly taken up with thoughts of God, and if one spake any thing to him of God, doubtlesse one would expect that he should speake wonderfull things of God, with so much admiration, such zeale, such love, with such feelings, that his very word would be able to enflame our hearts with love of God; but if when one came to see such an one, he should entertaine one with vaine and idle jests, with discourses of the world, and spend the whole day generally in recreations, and sometimes when he hath nothing else to doe goe and spend halfe an houre in reading, or in praying, and when he comes from those duties, (Iron will be red hot if it be put into the fire for any time) speake as savourly and with as much delight of the vanities of the world, as if he had spent his time not in prayer, but in admiring and gazing upon the beauty of the creature, and if one should speake to him something of God, he should answer one overly, would yee not thinke in your own soules, is this that holy man you spoke of? is he that man that was full of God? But to proceed a little further, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. the Apostle sayes of himselfe, and of Christians in his dayes, *that they were transformed into the image of God*; that is, lived the life of God, such a life as Christ lived when he was here on earth; nay, the grace of God in them was in such an high degree, that it might be rather called glory then grace; they lived as if they were of the Church triumphant, in respect of holinesse, though of the Church militant, in respect of afflictions; their grace was of such an high degree, that it was more like glory, as was said before, then grace, yet they did not content themselves with that neither, but made a progresse from glory to glory: Deare Brethren, are our Saviours words but winde, and can wee imagine that the lives of those that take upon them the names of Christians, are any whit sutable to these expressions: many times have I thought of that saying of *Erasmus*, That since men could not bring the world to Christianity, they have brought Christianity to the world, and those expressions and precepts, that have been too strict to give us liberty to follow the vanities of the world, wee have found out vaine distinctions and expositions of the places, to make them signifie no more then wee doe, and to quiet our consciences, that they being deceived and laid asleepe, we might not be troubled with their clamours. Our Saviour sayes, *That for every idle word wee must give an account at the last day*, Mat. 12. 36. The words are so plaine that it will aske one a great deale of labour to finde out such an exposition

position as might not be a continuall accuser of us in all companies, in all discourses, our Saviours example is the best exposition of this precept; we doe not reade in all the Scripture, one word that he spake, but was some way or other to edification, and yet how loose are wee in our discourses? as if there were no such place of Scripture in the whole Bible as these words; surely our time would be better spent in praying to God for strength against our corruptions, then in studying to finde out excuses and intricate expositions of plaine places to justifie them. But you will say, that it is true, these are excellent things, if one could live so, it were a blessed life; but alas, who can doe it?

I answer; First, If thou sayst thou canst not live thus, I aske thee how dost thou know? didst thou ever try what might be done in this case? didst thou ever make it thy businesse? it may be thou hast had some perfunctory and careless desires, some cold prayers and faint endeavours, but didst thou ever set thy selfe to it? didst thou ever spend as much time, so many thoughts, with as much earnestnesse, to get acquaintance with God; as men in the world doe in their trades, to get a little thicke clay; didst thou ever pray with halfe that earnestnesse for grace, as ambitious men doe sue for places and preferments, or a condemned man for a pardon? Didst thou ever seriously, and from the very bottom of thy heart and soule say; well, by the blessing of God I will not speake an idle word, nor imploy my selfe in things that profit not: hast thou said with *David? I have sworne and I will performe thy righteous Judgements*, Psal. 119. 106. or as in the 20. or with the Apostle; *I fight not as one beating the ayre, but I presse thorough towards the marke, and forget the things that are behinde, &c.* So that if thou shalt say, that one cannot live thus, I say againe there is no question, thou canst not live holily, doing no more then thou doest; neither the word of God, nor any one that knowes the wayes of God, ever said or thought that thou couldest upon these termes doe any thing to purpose in the attainment of holinesse: for our Saviour plainly says; *Wee must strive to enter in at the straite gate*; and, *that many shall seeke to enter in* (with such a seeking that comes not to the height of striving) *and shall not be able*: if thou shouldest bid thy servant lift such a peice of timber, and he should goe with his little finger to lift it, and not being able, should tell thee, that he could not lift it; wouldest thou not thinke that he mocked thee in stead of obeying thee? so when we shall complaine of Religion, that it is too difficule a thing, we cannot attaine it, and yet we will not so much as touch it scarce with one of our fingers; may not God justly say, that we doe but mocke him, and unjustly murmur against his commands, complaining of their difficulty, when we never tryed, in using the meanes he hath appointed us, what might be done.

Furthermore, Let us consider how farre many of Gods servants, whose stories are recorded in the sacred Scriptures have gone in this way of perfection; it is said, *that Enoch walked with God*, and *that Noah was perfect in his Generations and walked with God*. Can we possibly thinke that these Expressions import no more then that sometimes when they had little or

nothing

nothing elſe to doe, they ſpent their time in prayer and meditation of divine matters, or that they did no more then uſually men doe, in the morning ſpend ſome ſmall time in prayer; and then take their leave of God all the day; as it were compounding with God for two or three prayers a day; but doth it not much rather import a ſweet, conſtant, and ſtrict communion with God; for doubtleſſe *Enoch* found ſo much ſweetneſſe in his walke with God, that he could not be content with that communion that earth could afford him. And of all the Patriarks before the Flood, wee reade of none that lived ſo few yeares upon earth as *Enoch* did; and doubtleſſe thoſe yeares which he did live were more tedious to him to be ſo long abſent from the full fruition of God, then if he had lived ten times as long, and had not taſted of thoſe joyes, in compariſon of which the pleaſures of this world are but as the gall of Aſpes. What thinke we of *Abraham*, *Moſes*, *David*, and *Daniel*? with how much faith, zeale, meekneſſe, holineſſe, breathings after God did they live? What high expreſſions of joy, love, & heavenly deſires are there in the Pſalmes? What doe we thinke all theſe holy Examples are ſet downe in the Scripture to finde us matter of diſcourſe? or that the wiſedome of God ſet downe an Idæa of holineſſe, as *Plato* hath done of a Common wealth, or were they not ſet downe for our imitation? thouſands of expreſſions almoſt in the Pſalmes we muſt make ſtrange Hyperboles, ſay they, was but *Davids* Rhetoricke, or elſe wee muſt needs acknowledge that he was a Gyant in compariſon of us in ſpirituall matters. O what heaveuly ſpirituall frame of heart had he! ſurely his righteouſneſſe in reſpect of Chriſts was but as filthy rags, but in reſpect of ours a glorious robe: and now I pray, what reaſon is there in the world, why we might not live as holily as they, but that we take it for granted, we cannot, and ſo never ſtrive; 'tis true, to thinke our ſelves holier then the meaneſt Saint, is pride, but not to ſtrive to be as holy as the higheſt Saint is ſinne: what meanes had they to attaine holineſſe that we have not; they had prayer, meditation, reading, hearing; ſo have we; if their prayers and meditations were more fervent, and more heavenly, who muſt we blame, God is not a barren wilderneſſe unto us, and his grace is as ſufficient for them; they had Circumciſion, and the Paſſeover, the breaſts of the new Teſtament are as full of grace as thoſe of the old; nay doubtleſſe in reſpect of meanes they are farre more abundantly glorious in our dayes then in theirs, in reſpect of knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, and the myſteries of ſalvation: may we not ſay as our Saviour does, that of all that was borne of Women, there was none like *John the Baptiſt*, and yet the leaſt in the times of the Goſpell is or may be greater then he: and what enemies or hinderances have we that they had not? was Satan, the fleſh, the world, all or either of theſe not their enemies as much as ours? or had they better weapons or armour to fight againſt them then we have? wee have the armour of God, they could have no better: if you ſhall ſay, you had a great family to provide for, weighty affaires and imployments lay upon you, and theſe are great hinderances: in all theſe they exceeded thee, and yet they were

no hinderances to them in comparison of that, generally they are to us; *Abraham* drew three hundred out of his family to deliver *Lot*, besides what men, women, and children were left behinde. *Job* had also a great family, he was a Judge, and a Prince, and yet notwithstanding in all the whole world there was none like unto him. So *David* had a whole Kingdome to looke to, besides continuall warres, and yet how often did he pray, every day; how frequent was he in meditation? without all question did we make it our businesse to entreat the Lord for strength and grace to serve him, were we frequent and fervent enough in such desires, did wee seeke for wisedome as for silver, and search for understanding as for hid treasures, wee might doe wonders in Religion, in comparison of what we doe. And if you shall say, that all these you speake of are Prophets. I answer; what then? for the gifts of Prophecy were not gifts of sanctification, but of edification, they might have been as holy, and not have been Prophets, and they might have Prophesied, and yet be workers of iniquity. But to returne to what we spake, surely if men had faith, and that wrought by love as it should doe; if wee were as watchfull over our wayes as we might be, if we were not wanting to our selves, and to God, (for he is not wanting unto us) we might live many dayes, without doing or speaking any thing that materially is a sinne: I doe assuredly know, that no one thought, word, or action, but in some respect or other is sinfull, either the ground is not spirituall, or not so spirituall, the end is not heavenly, or not so heavenly, we doe not purely aime at the glory of God, nor purely doe it out of obedience to God, and in the name of Christ, &c. as we should; therefore I doe not say, we can live one minute without sinning against God, but one may live many houres and dayes without doing such actions which materially and in their own nature are sinnes: as now for those which are accounted grosse sinnes in the world, and are so, as adultery, murder, theft, blasphemy, swearing; it may be some of Gods people live their whole life without actually committing any one of them. What is meant by that that is said of *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, *that they lived blamelesse*, Luk. 1. 6. And what is meant by that of St *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 4. 4. *That he knew nothing by himselfe*: well, certainly those that love not to keepe a strict communion with God, and love not the truth, may finde excuses enough to bolster themselves up in their careleſse walke; nay, let them take heed, least they so provoke the Lord, that he sends them strong delusions to beleive lies. It may be, they will plead the infirmities and falls of the Saints, *Noahs* drunkennesse, *Davids* adultery, *Peters* deniall, and so encourage themselves in their own wickednesse; surely these failings of the Saints are set downe as sands and rocks to avoyd, not as our Compasse whereby we should steere our course: 'tis true, if after prayers and strivings against those sinnes, through the strength of our corruptions we fall into some sinne, we may take comfort from the infirmity and faylings of the Saints: but before our fall, what use have we o such faylings, but onely rocks, as I have said, comforts they may be after but not encouragements before, otherwise our spots are not the spots o Gods people.

2. Consi. The second Consideration is, that no art, science, or trade whatsoever, is attained without some yeares being prentice or studying of it; and can we imagine that we can attaine to any measure of perfection in Religion, without spending either time or thoughts about it, but making it a thing meerely by the by. The unreasonableneſſe of this conceit appeares the more, if we consider that we have no such impediments to hinder us from the attainment of excellencies in trades, arts, and sciences; nay those things that are hinderances in the attainment of holineſſe, doe further us in the attainment of such kinde of excellencies; to be an excellent workman in any trade, or to be an excellent Phyſitian, neither the world, nor our corruptions, nor Satan, are against it, the world generally doth promiſe and employ such persons; when they have an occasion to uſe any one of any trade or calling, they uſe the skilfulleſt, and so they are an encouragement to them: and for our corruptions, they doe not hinder, but rather further; for we pride our selves generally in such kinde of excellencies; and if the world, nor the fleſh be not, certainly Satan is not against them neither, but against holineſſe they are all enemies. Now if we should see a man rowing, having both winde and tide with him, and should row with all his might, and yet with much adoe come to such a place by night, and the next day being to row back againe against winde and tide, should take no paines at all, but lie sleeping in the Boat, as if the streame that was against him, should carry him backe of it selfe: when men shall spend so much paines, so many thoughts to get an eſtate; and in things concerning God and eternity, should carry themselves as if they were either not worth having, or as if holineſſe like weeds should grow of it selfe.

3. Consi. The third Consideration is, that there is no paine nor trouble in its selfe in Religion, nor no true pleaſure nor profit in sinne, or what pleaſure or paine soever there is in them, it is so short and so small, that it deserves not the name of either, doe but truly and seriously consider, what paine or trouble is there in spending an houre, in reading, meditating, or praying, I speake to the moſt disadvantage; for indeed one should rather say, what wonderfull delight there is in a strict and constant communion with God in such duties: but let it be supposed it be troubleſome, the trouble is nothing, but the comfort and the benefit is exceeding great; when thou haſt spent a day in humbling thy soule before God, I pray, next day is it any paine or trouble to you in respect of them, it is as the way of a Serpent upon a stone, there is nothing of the trouble that did accompany, those holy duties doth remaine when they are ended, but the comfort and profit of them thou mayeſt meet withall twenty yeares hence: and so for sinne, the pleaſure of it is momentany, but the guilt and sting of it is eternall; the poore empty pleaſures of sinne, what are they while they doe continue? but sure I am, they are bitterneſſe at the laſt, to have a guilty conscience, and a wounded spirit, but one houre in any extremity, as poore soules in diſtertion or deſpaire have, hath so much horror in it, that doubtleſſe whoſoever hath had any experience in

such things, would not endure them for all the pleasures in the world for *Methusalems* age: but alas we looke not a farre off, consider neither the end of holinesse, nor of sinne; nay to speake the truth, we consider not the essentiall excellency of the one, nor filthinesse of the other.

4. Consi. Fourthly, Consider that there is not the least sinne, nor the least holy thought that shall vanish into ayre or into nothing; for if God shall call us to account for every idle thought or word, shall not every holy thought and word through his mercy tend to our good also? if the wicked doe treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, as a man that should cast in every day many peices of silver and gold into a roome for twenty yeares together, or more, when he should come to looke in that roome at the twenty yeares end, he would finde many a peice which he had forgotten; so it is with one that treasures up sinne, when the booke of conscience shall be opened at the last day, and the baggs wherein God sealed up his sinnes, as *Job* speakes, how many sinnes will he meet withall that he never thought of, untill that day? not one of them shall be lost that ever he cast in: so surely it will be with thee that treasureſt up prayers and holy thoughts; God doth as safely seale up them as he doth the sinnes of the wicked: there is a booke of remembrance writ of all thy good words, and there is a bottle to bottle up all thy teares: now how easie is it for thee to cast into this treasury a thousand holy thoughts a day, to what a numberlesse number would they arise to in few yeares; and by these not any businesse is hindred; thou mayst ride, thou mayst eate and drinke, thou mayst sell and buy, thou mayst walke for all them: now if every holy thought doth adde something to thy grace here, and to thy glory hereafter, and since they doe not hinder, but sweeten and sanctifie all imployments, why doest thou not treasure up these against the day of the Lord.

5. Consi. Fifthly, Consider seriously the excellencies of the Scriptures, for we are not sensible enough of their worth, nor doe wee firmely and sealingly enough believe that they are the word of God: Suppose that by some infallible arguments it might be demonstrated that there were a Prophet now in *England*, with what extraordinary care and observation would you observe his words that he spake in the name of the Lord: if when thou wert powring out thy soule before God, humbly begging of him that he would discover to thee more the things that belong to thy peace, and thou shouldest have an Angel from Heaven coming unto thee, as one did to *Cornelius*, or that our Saviour should himselfe speake to thee from Heaven, as he did to *Paul*, when thou shalt say as he did; *Lord, what wouldst thou have me to doe?* With what reverence and attention wouldest thou observe, and what obedience to a title wouldest thou give to such Messages? Wouldest not thou marke every word, and every syllable? and wouldest not vary from them one jott. Well, thou shouldest give no lesse reverence nor obedience unto the Word of God, then unto them. If thy friend speakes to thee, or writes to thee, so thou art sure that it is his hand, they are both of equall authority with thee; and why

should

ſhould not the word of God immediately ſpoken from heaven, or written be ſo too, of equall authority with thee? to have an Angel from heaven to tell thee what thou ſhouldeſt doe, is a ſtronger temptation to pride, but there is no more of reality in it to move thee to obedience, then there is in the written word; nay, may I not ſay leſſe, for the Word of God is the rule by which we muſt judge their Meſſages; and not their Meſſages the rule by which we muſt judge the Word of God; for if an Angel from Heaven ſhould preach another doctrine, let him be accurſed. Now there is no reaſon, thou beleeving the Bible to be the Word of God, which we all profeſſe, but thou ſhouldeſt with as much care endeavour to underſtand and practiſe what therein is written: if we will doe but as *Luther* did that he might underſtand, *Rom.* 3. 25, 26. faſt and pray when we finde any place of Scripture too difficult to be underſtood, or when we found our corruptions ſo ſtrong that we obeyed not: when it is underſtood, if we ſought the Lord by prayer and faſting, a duty generally neglected, and by ſome condemned, though by the Apoſtles commended and practiſed; ſurely wee ſhould both underſtand more of the minde of God, and live more ſuitable to what we know.

6. Conſi. Sixly, Conſider that howſoever we eſteem it matters not, without Queſtion the enjoyment of God is infinite happineſſe: for doe but truly and really conſider, wherein doth the happineſſe of Angells conſiſt; doth it not conſiſt in the viſion, fruition, and union with God? is not God their all, and ſhall he not be ours when we come thither? how comes it to paſſe, that it is not ſo now? nay it is ſo, but how comes it to paſſe, that it is not ſo to us? either the Angells are deceived in making of it their happineſſe, or we muſt be deceived in not making of it ours; we cannot have the face to ſay, that if the Angells knew what pleaſure there were in eating and drinking, and other vaine and wicked pleaſures of the world, they would never ſpend their eternity in ſinging the praiſes, in beholding the face, and admiring the excellency of God; yet though we are aſhamed to ſay thus, yet by our lives we generally hold forth this blaſphemy, and proclaime it to the whole world; nay, let me raiſe this one ſtep higher, the bleſſednеſſe of God wherein doth it conſiſt, the creature is not his happineſſe but himſelfe, and if God be enough for himſelfe, ſhall he not be enough for thee? oh duſt and aſhes his enjoyment of himſelfe, is his happineſſe, how comes it to paſſe that it is not thine? God doth command, invite thee, entreate thee to enjoy him; nay indeed what is it that God requires of thee, but this, even to admire, love, and enjoy him in the ſecret of thy ſoule, thou wilt not, thou preferreſt every trifle before him; thou wilt goe and ſee a carnall friend for carnall ends, rather then ſpend thy time in the enjoyment of him, who is the praiſe, and above the praiſe of men, and Angells to all eternity; pray to him who onely can diſcover his love and excellencies to thee, that he would make thee taſte of this hidden Manna; that he would draw away the vaile from before thine eyes, that thou mayſt be no longer ignorant of this truth; that he would purge out thoſe corruptions out of thy heart, that thou mayſt reliſh and experiment the ſweetneſſe of it.

7. Conſi.

7. Consi. Seaventhly, Consider that we have three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the Devill; Consider this, I say, fully and feelingly, for few there are that live so much as a tittle of this truth; or who lives as if the world was his implacable enemy? for do we not generally into all our actions put something of that poysonous ingredience, *viz.* a desire to please men, and to get their good word and will; we ought not to scandalize any one as much as in us lyes; we ought to be all things to all men; but it is that we may gaine them to God, not to our selves: if this truth was ingraven in our hearts, that it is as possible to goe to heaven and please the Devill, as goe to heaven and please the world. I say, if we were fully perswaded in our hearts of that truth, we would neither wonder the world hates us, nor endeavour that it should love us: we should not endeavour nor cast away our paines to doe that which is absolutely impossible; so then if we resolve to be Christians, we must neither feare nor care what the world can say of, or doe unto us. And we should in all our actions of Religion, not so much as once bring it into our consideration, to thinke what men will say or doe unto me, if I doe so, or so, except it be by their dislike to helpe our selves to know what is right; for though it is not an absolute rule, yet it is a generall rule, that such a thing is right, because men generally speake against it; certainly, our desires and endeavours to please men, is one of the greatest snares in the world; for generally we live so that we enslave our selves, and loose not onely our Christian, but our naturall liberty for men; but indeed if it was no more but our outward liberty, it was nothing, but we wound our consciences, and offend our God, which is worth more then a thousand Heavens.

Cautions.

1. Caut. First, Take heed of the perfunctory performance of holy duties; for many mischieses come by them.

First, They puffe up, not edifie; if thou powrest out thy soule before God in prayer, feelingly, spiritually, and faithfully, thou never departest without some spirituall profit; but if thou dost it carnally and formally, thy prayers are but winde, and they puffe thee up, for thy carnall heart would plead these carnall performances to thy conscience, and make thee believe because thou hast many peices of this counterfeit coine, that thou art rich and wantest nothing, though thou art poore and blinde and naked and miserable; for thy duties have not the right stamp, having neither the image nor superscription of God upon them, being neither performed for the glory of God, nor by the Spirit of God, nor in the name of Christ: and between carnall and spirituall duties, this is the difference, that wee usually pride our selves in the one, and are humbled by the other.

Secondly, Which followes upon the former, we shall grow weary in time of performing carnall duties, for needs must we be weary of these things from which we get no profit nor strength: when duties are dry breasts unto us, it is no marvell if we are weary of drawing them; by spirituall duties we get strength; and such prayers doe enable us to pray more; but carnall prayers tire us.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Consider the same time is spent in the one as in the other? whether thou heareſt or prayeſt, with zeale and attention, or without it, takes up the same time in the Publique Congregation, though not the same profit.

Fourthly, Consider that you spoyle both, by mixing the thoughts of worldly buſineſſe with ſpirituall duties; for thy outward performance of the duty keeps thy thoughts of buſineſſe from coming to maturity, & the thoughts of worldly things keepe thy prayers from doing thee any good, ſo that they ſpoile one another; I meane of thoſe wandring thoughts that we let lie in our duties, for thoſe that are reſiſted and removed and mourned for, doe ſomewhat hinder but not putrifie the duty; for as the Wiſe man ſaith; *That dead flyes cauſe the ointment of the Apothecary to ſend forth a ſtinking ſavour*; if one takes out a fly as ſoone as it is come into it, ſo much of the ointment that ſtickes about the fly is loſt, but the reſt remaines ſweet and pure, as it was before: ſo wandring thoughts ſpoyle ſomething of our prayer, though they be reſiſted and removed, they make a little hole in our prayer by taking up that time which ſhould have been fild up with better thoughts; but if they continue, they eate up the fat of thoſe ſacrifices, and make the ſweet odours of our prayers noiſome. But to conclude this Caution, if we were but in any meaſure ſenſible of the Majeſty of him to whom, and the neceſſitie of thoſe things for which we pray (to inſtance in that duty) for they are our life and of the neceſſity of having them from God, we need no other Motives to deterre us from perfunctory performances.

2. Caut. Secondly, Take heed of worldly company, for whoſoever delights in that, will finde that he never comes out of it but worſe then he comes into it; for when one goes into ſuch company among whom there is nothing ſpoken of God, of Chriſt, or of the Spirit, of the Word of God, and of ſpirituall experiences, where there is no ſpirituall duty performed; except one be exceeding carefull to ſequeſter ones minde from their diſcourſes, and keepe a ſtrict communion with God in the ſecrets of our hearts, our graces if they were ſtrong would grow weake, and our corruptions though they were weake would grow ſtrong, and that ſpirituall advantage which you have got by many prayers you will finde will be loſt in a little time ſpent in ſuch company, except their diſcourſes be as dry breaſts unto you, and as *Meſſech* and *Kedar* were unto *David*, they muſt either be a griefe or ſinne unto them, except in ſome caſes, as in caſe of buſineſſe, thy particular calling, or charity, if thou comeſt as a Phyſician, either of their bodies or of their ſoules, then thou not onely mayſt but oughteſt to come unto them; in ſuch caſes, our Saviour did frequently eat with Publicans and ſinners, not out of any love he had to their worldly converſation, but to their converſion: and this muſt be taken as a rule, he that knowes not how to be alone, knowes not how to be in company with profit.

3. Caut. Thirdly, Take heed of idleneſſe; for as the Wiſe man ſays; *Seeſt thou one wiſe in his own eyes, there is more hope of a foole then of him:* for to make ſuch a man wiſe, there are two things to be done. Firſt,

First, You must bring him to that, that he may know himselfe to be ignorant, and then you must teach him wisedome, whereas he that is ignorant, and knowes himselfe to be so, needs onely the last; so he that is in any honest employmẽt, Satan hath two works to do to make him sin. First, He must get him to leave off what he is doing, and then perswade him to the evill that he tempts him to: as a bowle that is running must be first stopped before it can be made to run the contrary way; whereas the bowle that lyes still may without stopping be cast what way one pleases: a bird that is flying one can hardly take any aime at, as one may at that which sits still: so Satan cannot levell his temptations so at a busie as at an idle man: but I shall not prosecute this common place of idlenesse, but my maine designe is to give you caution against spirituall idlenesse, for that which is not taken notice enough of, that is not avoyded nor mourned for enough is that we thinke that we are not idle, if we are busied in worldly employments, if we are selling of wares in our shops, or riding of a journey, or busied in some such employment of our particular calling. The man threshеth and plowes all day and thinkes that he is free from idlenesse; but we should know that if our thoughts are not employed upon spirituall things when they may, it is the worst idlenesse of all, and very few worldly businesses there are that stand in need of the continuall intention of our thoughts upon them, for it is rather our love of the world that taxeth our thoughts upon worldly matters while we are employd about them, then because they might not be done as well without halfe that intention of minde; doubtlesse there are many *dissemĩata vacua* in all employments of the world, which might and ought to be filled up with spirituall thoughts; and as it is with Bees though they gather honey from a flower, they leave it as fragrant and as fresh as they found it; so we gathering and mixing spirituall thoughts with and from our worldly businesse, we hinder it not at all; for as a vessell that is full of sand will hold almost as much water as if there were no sand in it; so when we are full of employments, we may hold a thousand holy thoughts; and as a ship can hardly be so fild with chests or other lading, but there will be so many corners unfild up, wherein Diamonds of such great value might be put in, that they would be more worth then all the lading of the Ship; so those thoughts of God and spirituall things which we might have in the midst of our other employments, as may be of farre greater value then they.

Fourthly, Take heed of perfunctory and careless resisting of temptations, but what thou dost in that particular as in spirituall things doe it with all thy might, for to thinke and weakly to resolve against sinne, will not hinder but aggravate thine offence, and it is one of Satans policies to let one alone to thinke of severall Motives against any sinne, when he sees that he hath one fast enough; for he knowes that the more Motives we sinne against, the more we are hardened, and God is provoked: and as it is with a Towne that is besieged, they will willingly let so many of their enemies in, as they know they are able to master; so Satan when he sees

that

that the Motives and resolutions that enter into the soule are too weake, he willingly suffers them to enter, for perfunctory performances of duties and resisting of temptations, are equally dangerous, if the latter be not the worst; by the former we get no spirituall good, and by the latter we overcome no spirituall evill.

5. Caut. Take heed of making others sinne, either by scandall, or being a temptation to them by example or provocation, it is a good way when one hath to deale with a passionate man, not onely to prepare our selves for the Combate by prayer and resolutions and keeping a strong guard upon our hearts, that we may not be overcome with passion, howsoever he shall use us, either in word or in deed; but to take speciall care and to use all meanes to keepe him from passion; for there is a wretched joy that our hearts are subject to take in the sins of others, thinking them to be a foile to our innocency, to have others very passionate when we are very meeke; there is a secret delight that the heart is prone to take, but it proceeds from a desperate pride in us, who desire to have our excellencies made manifest, though with the dishonour of God and damnation of our brothers; but there is a great deale of hell in it, and charity rejoyceth not in ill. *1 Cor.* 13.

6 Caut. Take heed of studying high speculative points whatsoever, for when our thoughts are exceedingly intent in finding out truths, all the fire is in the top of the chimney, and none is left upon the hearth, generally high speculations leave the heart cold without devotion, for generally there is a great deale of curiosity and pride in such studies, for commonly we desire to be accounted knowing men, in searching into whys and hows of Gods works and truths; as why God made the tree of knowledge of good and evill, and how there can be three persons, and but one God, therefore in all reading joyne prayer, whether it be in the reading of humane or divine things, and take speciall care that the love of God goe not out, nor grow cold in you. That which I have heard of one, is a good practice, that whatsoever booke he was reading, every leafe that he turned over he would looke what was become of his heart, and of God, and would not begin till he had sent up some prayers to the Lord for direction.

Advises.

1. Adv. First, Concerning writing, many wayes thou art to employ that for thy advantage.

First, Write downe all those spirituall passages out of Sermons, books, discourses, wherein thou hast found most relish and spirituall profit.

Secondly, Keepe a Register of all the mercies that God hath bestowed upon thee, whether it be temporall or spirituall, but especially thy spirituall experiences, and his manifestations of his love, if ever the terrours of the Allmighty was upon thee, the wayes of Gods providence in supporting thee, and how, and when, and in what manner he delivered thee.

And so for the discoveries of his love, and concerning the mercies God hath bestowed upon thee, how and whether, and when he answers your prayers; as also all the speciall wayes of Gods providence to other spirituall persons, in temporalls or spiritualls, and when thou findest thy heart dull and cold in love, or weake in faith, these experiences of Gods goodnesse to thy selfe and others, will be an excellent means to enflame and strengthen thee.

Lastly, Keepe a Diurnall of thy life in respect of the spirituall passages of every day; set downe whether thou didst awake with God, or whether the world had the first fruits of thy thoughts, and how thou didst performe spirituall duties, whether with relish, fervency, or delights, or otherwise; marke and set downe when thy heart made any default, intermitting its communion with God, and all the severall sinnes that thou canst take notice of, that thou hast committed that day, and what mercies thou hast received, and when there is any mercy that thou prayest for some marke should be set untill thou hast an answer of that prayer from God, and that day the Lord gives thee that answer, make a reference from that day to the day of the praying for that mercy.

2. Adv. Secondly, Choose some spirituall friend one or more, to whom thou mayst wholly unbosome thy selfe in all spirituall matters; but a great deale of caution need to be had in this particular, he need to be one of a thousand that thou chooseſt; thus thou needest have a great deale of experience of his spirituall wisedome, humility, and experience of the wayes of God, for be he never so learned, though he understand all mysteries & all knowledge, though he hath never such excellent gifts of edification, yet if he be not an experienced Christian, thou wilt little benefit either by his society or counsell, for when he speaks of spirituall and experimentall truths, and the discourses of such truths are the very life of the communion of Saints, I say that his discourses concerning such matters, be he never so learned, if he be not experienced in them will be without life or relish, he will seldome speake of such things, but when he does it, it will be with so much heavinesse, that thou mayst clearely perceive that he doth speake but by rote, and of things that he delights not in, and for his advise in spirituall matters it must needs be very imperfect, for thousand cases may happen of which bookes speake nothing; and having no other way to understand them, and direct thee, he will be at a losse, as one that travells by a Map, and hath no other way to guide himselfe, he will meet with many turnings, that put him to a non plus which way to take, whereas he that hath often travelled that way is a farre safer guide; the truth is, we have no knowledge of God, or no saving knowledge of him, but what is by experience: to conclude therefore, if thou wilt choose a spirituall friend, choose such an one as magnifies Christ, and the Spirit of God, and his teachings, and the word of God and inward mortifications above outward, and that is an experienced wise and humble Christian, and thou shalt get a world of good by the converse of such an one, for in doubts his wisdome

wisdome and experience will direct thee, in thy distresses he will comfort thee, when thou art spiritually cold, his example and carriage in the performance of holy duties, his discourses of heavenly things, and the flames of his love will set thee on fire.

3. Adv. The third is diurnall examination, every night strictly to examine what thou hast done that day; we reade of God himselfe that every day he looked over his workes: surely God hath no need to examine his workes, but it is writ for our instruction, and doubtlesse the benefit and necessitie of this examination are very great.

First, Wee should finde out our sinnes before they come to be customary, when they are but a-day old, and before they have taken root in us, and so they will easily be pull'd up, and by faith, repentance, prayer, and resolutions against them, we shall easily get the victory over them, and through the help of God, who makes us more then conquerours; it is very likely by the blessing of God, if *David* had not neglected the examining of his soule that day when he defiled *Bathshebah*, he would have discovered that abomination, and he would never have gone so farre as to have added bloud and the rest of his abominations to his uncleanenesse, and he would have watered his couch with his teares, which he had defiled with his adultery.

The second advantage is that we shall never lie in any sin unrepented of, and there be many other inconveniences besides bringing it to a custome that comes by sinne lying, and our soules unrepented of; for it deads our prayers, cooles our love, hardens our heart, makes us that we cannot come to God with that joy, with that freedome of spirit, as when one hath done ones friend an injury, one is loath to see him.

The third advantage is by our dividing this great worke of giving up our account, and making all even betwixt God and our selves, the worke will be very ease, which if we shall not doe it but at our death, or onely yearely, it would be exceeding difficult, and almost impossible: as if some Merchant who had very great trading, should ballast his accounts of debts, receipts of disbursements, &c. but once in seven yeares, it would be an intolerable burden; besides, many things would be forgotten, whereas it being done daily, his accounts are perfected with more ease and fewer defaults.

The fourth advantage is that at thy death thou wilt have a world of comfort by taking this course; for besides that thou art eased of that burthen of having all the accounts of thy life to make up then, thou hast a cleere way to answer Satan, when he shall lay to thy charge any sinnes of thy former life; for if he shall accuse thee, and say, dost thou not remember, that such a yeare, and such a day, thou didst commit such a sin; thou mayst answer him, and say, it is true that such a day I did commit such a sinne, but then that very night I mourned for it, and went not to bed before I had my pardon sealed with the bloud of Christ to my soule; and when Satan shall not be able to lay to thy charge any debt of which thou

haſt not had an acquittance, nor any ſin for which thou haſt not had a pardon from the Lord, ſuch fiery darts will have no power to wound thee: and this examination thou mayſt make thus: Conſider all the ſeverall houres of the day, and how thou haſt ſpent them; when thou didſt firſt awake, what didſt thou thinke of when thou wert aſleepe, and thoughtſt not of thy ſelfe, God thought on thee, and thou wert ſafe under the ſhadow of his wings; *When I awake thou art with me*, ſayes *David*; was not God with *David* when he was aſleepe? yes ſurely; for his being with him when he was awake, ſhewed that he was there before; for it is not ſaid, *When I awake thou comeſt to me*, but *art with me*. Well, but what are thy thoughts when thou firſt waketh? are they of God, or of the world? Thou ſhalt much diſcover the temper of thy heart by this, thoſe that are our very familiar acquaintance, we ſuffer them to come into our chambers before we are up: ſurely God is a ſtranger to thee, if thou thinkeſt not of him, nor ſeekeſt him on thy bed; then as the Apoſtle ſays, *If the firſt fruits are holy, the whole lumpe is holy*: ſo generally as thy firſt thoughts are, ſuch art thou all the day after: in the morning thou ſayſt, *it will be foule weather*, ſays our Saviour, *for the ſkie is red and lowring*; ſo we may ſay of the day in reſpect of ſpirituall matters; if thy morning thoughts be red and lowring, it will be foule weather in thy ſoule that day: and when thou readeſt over thy diary thou ſhalt finde that thoſe dayes when thou ſhalt finde that thy waking and morning thoughts were full of God, that all the duties of that day, whether of thy generall or particular calling, were of God alſo. Well, what didſt thou thinke of afterwards, didſt thou keepe thy thoughts cloſe to God, untill thy morning exerciſe? didſt thou dreſſe thy ſoule as thou didſt dreſſe thy body? Well, after that what didſt thou doe ſuch an houre and ſuch an houre, &c. Or to helpe thee in this duty ſomething more, examine at night thy workes, words, thoughts, what they were every houre of the day; for thy works, conſider what thy religious workes, the works of thy particular calling, and thy recreations were; for thy prayers, haſt thou not omitted thy ſeven times a day, if thou haſt attained with *David* to that number? or how often ſoever thy ſet times are, haſt thou not omitted them? for I dare not diſcourage any one in obſerving ſet times as if that could not be don lawfully. Well, how haſt thou prayed, haſt thou performed that duty as a taske, or as a means? haſt thou bound up thy devotion to ſuch a number of times of going to God? or haſt thou given God thoſe prayers as a Compoſition? or as the rent of the day, that thou mayſt doe with the reſt and ſpend the reſt in vanity as thou pleaſeſt, or didſt thou not much rather performe that duty of prayer as an act of communion with God for the preſent, and as an helpe for communion with God for the future? Didſt thou not by thy prayers intend and deſire of the Lord power and ſtrength not to depart from him. What were thy prayers? were they faithfull, fervent, reverend, humble? What returnes of thy prayers haſt thou had this day? haſt thou endeavoured to obtaine thoſe mercies and graces that thou prayedſt for?

thou

thou mockeſt God to pray for thoſe things thou endeavoureſt not for; and thou mockeſt thy ſelfe to endeavour for thoſe things thou prayeſt not for; for thy meditations and reading the Word of God, how haſt thou performed them? What power have they had upon thy heart this day? haſt thou been more faithfull, humble, charitable, &c? What reſolutions didſt thou make? and haſt thou kept them, &c? Concerning thy reading the Scriptures and meditation, moſt of the things which are ſpoken concerning prayer, may be applyed to theſe alſo: as didſt thou meditate and reade as a taske, or as a means? and ſo of the reſt. Concerning the workes of thy particular calling, have they not juſtled out the workes of thy generall calling? haſt thou not unneceſſarily omitted thy ſet times for ſpirituall duties? or have not thy thoughts been taken up too much with them? haſt thou not left off thy communion with God? God may be with thee in thy ſhop as well as in thy Cloſet. Againe, if thou art a tradeſman, haſt thou not tooke advantage of the neceſſity of the ſeller, and bought too cheape, and of the ignorance of the buyer, and ſold too deare? haſt thou not ſold thy conſcience with thy wares? Concerning thy recreations, have they not been unlawfull recreations in reſpect of the kinde? haſt thou not made a ſport of ſinne, making that a recreation which ſhould be thy griefe? making that thy delight, which ſhould make a Chriſtian weepe? have not thy recreations been unlawfull in reſpect of time? have they not been unſeaſonable? haſt thou not uſed recreations, when thou ſhouldeſt have put on ſackcloth, not being ſenſible of the afflictions of *Joſeph*? for have not thy recreations taken up too much time? haſt thou not made a vocation of recreation? the beſt way is by prayer and by frequent communion with God, to attaine to that ſpirituall frame of ſoule, that thou mayeſt goe to God, as *David* ſpeakes, *Pſal* 43. 4. to make God *thy exceeding joy*; ſo ſhall thy great buſineſſe and deſigne that thou haſt in the whole world be turned into a recreation, and thou ſhalt need no other, but thou ſhalt be as thoſe that are in heaven, it ſhall be thy eternall buſineſſe and delight to admire and praiſe God? What have thy words been, thou muſt give an account at the laſt day for every idle word? how many haſt thou ſpoken this day? where, when, and with whom haſt thou diſcourſed, and what hath thy diſcourſe been of? have thy words been to edification? Remember what the Apoſtle ſays, that *we muſt avoyde fooliſh talking and jeſting, which is not convenient*; haſt thou not this day ſlandered or ſpoken ill of thy neighbour? if thou haſt, beſides thy humbling thy ſelfe before God, and asking pardon of him, make ſome recompence to thy neighbour, and put up as many prayers to God for him, as thou haſt ſpoken evill words of him? for thy thoughts, what have they been? have not vaine thoughts lodged in thee? the fountaine of all ſinne are our thoughts, if thou keepeſt them cloſe to God, all the reſt will follow, thy words and thy converſation will be ſpirituall alſo; haſt thou not had a thouſand thoughts of God this day? if thou haſt not, thou haſt loſt that which is irrevocable; for though thou haſt a thouſand thoughts of God

next day, thy losse this day is not thereby recovered, for thy having a thousand thoughts of God this day, doth not hinder thee from having a thousand thoughts next day, but rather further thee; the more thoughts thou hast of God, the more thou mayest have; and for thy thoughts of God, what have they been? have they been fervent as well as frequent? have thy thoughts of God been worthy of God, or have not thy thoughts of God been such that thou shouldest have had of the world, and the thoughts of the world such as thou shouldest have had of God.

4. Adv. The fourth, is Meditation, a duty of so great concernment, so much profit, that nothing but experience can make one know the benefit of it, and the man of the greatest devotion, and of the heavenliest affections, that we reade of in all the Bible, though indeed for matter of revelations, it may be, something more is spoken of others then of him, I meane *David* was exceedingly versed in Meditation, and doth speake very much of it concerning his own practise, and commending it to others: you know very well that he sets it downe as the onely, or at least the chiefe exercise of the blessed man, *to meditate in the Word of God day and night*; he delights in the word of God, and therefore meditates in it, and meditates in it, and therefore delights in it: one that walkes in a garden, sees the beauty, and may smell sweetnesse of the flowers growing there, but it is the Bee that gathers honey out of them: to reade and study the Scriptures, hath a great deale of sweetnesse in it, but it is meditating on the Scriptures that brings the sweetest and lastingest benefit; the end of study is knowledge, but the end of meditation is also holy affections and practise. Now that which I advise and direct in this particular is to know how to reade and meditate on the holy Scriptures, to our greatest spirituall comfort and advantage, and there are many Advises to this purpose.

First, Take the Bible, open it, reade it with the same attention, reverence, and resolution to follow it; as if Christ living on the earth, either, by reason of sicknesse, or some other occasion, not being able to goe to him thy selfe, thou should'st send some spirituall friend with thy humble desires to Christ to advise thee what to beleive & doe, and Christ should send a Letter to thee by that friend, how exceedingly wouldest thou prize that Letter? how wouldest thou rejoyce and long to reade it? how strictly wouldest thou observe every syllable? goe take the Bible, open it, and doe likewise. Wee doe not reade that ever Christ writ any thing with his owne hand, save that which he wrote upon the ground, *John* 8. and what that was wee know not; and what might be the reason? might not one, if not the chiefest reason be, least we should Idolize that place of Scripture, and despise the rest in comparison of that; it is not the hand, but the Spirit of Christ that gives authority to Scripture; wee have strange opinions of the bodily prefence of Christ, wee thinke had wee lived in his dayes, wee would have gone to him and acknowledged our sinnes, and craved pardon and direction, and scarce doubt but we should have obtained

obtained both, but wee consider not wee have as neere and as certaine a way to obtaine them now as then, nay wee had the same way as they had; for it was their faith that made them whole, and by faith we may be made so too in respect of spirituall diseases; so if an Angel should bring a Message from Heaven to us, how would wee observe and follow it? the Scripture should be of as great power and authoritie with us as that Message, and indeed more; for if it were possible that such a Message should contradict any thing in the Scripture; the Scripture must be beleeved before it: but of this more largely in the fifth Consideration.

Secondly, Reade every Verse in the Bible with this consideration, that the Holy Spirit of God when he inspired the Apostle, Prophet, or other Pen-men of the holy Scriptures to write that place, did particularly intend thy good in it; for wee must not conceive that the Scripture was written for their good onely who lived in those times when those severall Bookes were published, but to all ages, for every particular man that should live in those severall generations. The Scripture it selfe is plaine in this particular; *Rom.* 15. 4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope* Deut. 29. 29. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but these things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our Children for ever, that we may doe all the words of the Law.*

Nay wee reade of a particular promise made to a particular person upon a speciall occasion, if any part of Scripture were not to extend to every particular person that should live while the world lasts, one would thinke it should be that, yet even that very promise the Apostle brings, even that as a promise particularly to be applyed to every Christian: compare but these places, *Heb.* 13. 5. *Josh.* 1. 5. The Scripture like a well made Picture lookes upon every one in particular, so directly as if it looked upon none else: wee generally reade the Scriptures as we heare Sermons, without a particular and personall application of them; if a godly Minister should come home to any one of our houses, and take one aside, and tell one privately and feelingly, you professe your selves Christians, but there is little or nothing of Christianity appeares in your lives, you live not as becomes the Gospell of Jesus Christ; it would startle us; wee heare the same in the Pulpit, and we let it passe as a thing not concerning us: if one should come from an house of uncleanesse, and heare a voice from Heaven, saying, *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*, it would strike terrour into that mans heart; he reads the same words in the Scripture, and they are a dead letter to him.

Thirdly, Reade the Scripture to a right end, for which it was written, not for custome, or that you might be able to discourse, and because you are ashamed to be ignorant of those things which you conceive every Christian should know, and having an occasion divers times in company

pany in such matters, then you would be loath to be able to say nothing; but consider what end the Scripture was writ for, *Rom.* 15. 4. *Rev.* 3, 10. 1 *Pet.* 2. 2. 2 *Tim.* 3. 16. and many other places, see them downe: our knowledge, our affections, and our lives are quite out of frame, and thou must goe to the holy Scriptures there to finde out directions to cure these distempers: and in a word, that thou mayst be able to know, admire, love, feare, trust, and serve God more then thou doest; thou shou'dst never reade any part of the word of God, without a particular intention to advantage thy selfe in these particulars by thy reading.

Fourthly, Thou must humbly and earnestly pray to the Lord to give thee his Spirit to understand what thou readest in his Word; take heed of going with thine owne humane spirit, and in the strength of thy learning, to search out the deepe things of God; goe to the shallows of the workes which wee call the workes of Nature, and thou shalt finde that thou art not able to fadome them; the winde thou heareſt the sound thereof, but knoweſt not whence it comes, nor whither it goes, and how canst thou presume to understand the great mysteries of God which the Angells themselves desire to locke into, without the helpe of the Spirit of God which teacheth wisedome secretly; let thy desires be fervent, for the things written in the Word of God are thy life; desire the Lord to give thee a powerfull, spirituall, and experimentall knowledge, of the truths that thou shalt reade.

Fifthly, Promise the Lord that if he will but reveale to thee his will, thou wilt doe it, and obey him in it, whether it be good or evill; *Jer.* 42. 6. whether it be pleasing or displeasing to thine own will: wee doe not use to tell any one a receipt to cure a disease he is sicke of, if wee know he is resolved not to take it, nor doe thou satisfie thy selfe with a neutrality, to finde thy selfe neither resolved to follow, nor not to follow what thou shalt understand, it is an hard thing when one whom God hath loved so much shall give no other returne of all his goodnesse but this, that he doth not finde his heart to hate and rebell against him: many people doe little better then use the Scripture as a charme, they thinke by reading so many Chapters a day, they shall be cured of all spirituall diseases, had they not as good thinke that by hanging some Chapters or two about their necke, they shall be cured of some corporall disease; if one should have a receipt to cure the gout, and he should reade it over every day twice or thrice, and thinke thereby to be cured, though he never tooke what was prescribed; so it is with him that thinkes the bare reading of the Word of God will doe him any good without being, beleeving, and doing accordingly.

Sixthly, When thou art thus prepared reade that place which thou intendest to meditate of, and consider what the true meaning of the place is, to the understanding whereof before thou didst crave the assistance of the Spirit of God, but if the place be knotty and hard to be understood,

understood, passe it by, for such places are not proper places of meditation, but of study; for meditation thou must choose those places of Scripture as are fit for the affectionate, not the speculative part of Divinity, such as may more affect the heart, then busie the braine to understand it, and thou must not be curious to raise nice observations from the words, but take those truths that lie open in the Text.

First, Because those truths that lie hidden in one place of Scripture are obvious in another.

Secondly, Because when the braine is much implyed, the heart lyes dead without affections.

Thirdly, Because that time thou spendest in finding out curious observations may be farre more profitably spent in working thy heart to holy affections and resolutions from some other truth that will presently occurre from the words.

Lastly, It shewes that there is not so great spirituall hunger after righteousnesse as there should be; for hungry men doe not use to stand and picke bones when they have meate enough to eate.

Seaventhly, When thou hast raised any observation from the words, then thou art to put one of these three Questions to thy selfe; Doe I thus? Is it thus with me? and beleeve I thus? One or two, or all of these will belong to every Text, some to all, and all to some, as *Luke* 12. 32. *Feare not little flocke, it is your Fathers good will to give you the Kingdome*: Doe I thus, that is, for the first branch *feare not*; doe I feare, then is it thus with me; am I little in my owne eyes, am I one of Christs flocke, am I one of that small number that shall be saved? Lastly, doe I beleeve, this, that God will give the Kingdome of Heaven to such.

Eighthly, If thou doest finde, that thou art, doest, or beleevest as the Word requires, give God the praise, humbly acknowledging that it is not thy doing at all, either that thou art or doest or beleevest what thou shouldest, and if thou findest that thou prydest thy selfe instead of being thankfull, as if they were from thy selfe, or that by any of them as thine act thou mayest be justified, then doe but thinke in how many other things thou failest, and how even in these very particulars, if thou considerest, either the measure, manner, ground, and end, thou shalt finde them all to be defective, and thy best righteousnesse not onely to be ragged, but filthy too.

Ninthly, If thou findest that either it is not with thee, or that thou doest not, or beleevest not as the Word requires, then,

First, Humble thy selfe before the Lord, and desire pardon and helpe for the future.

Secondly, Seriously consider what is the reason (if it be that thou beleevest not) why thou art not established in that truth, say to thy selfe, O my soule, God can neither be deceived, nor deceive, and that this is his Word that wee now reade and meditate on, is more certaine then any reason that can possibly be brought against it; consider that generally

the howes and whyes of Gods truths and workes are the things that stumble us; as how can there be three persons and yet but one God; and why should God hate *Esau* and love *Jacob*? in those cases say to thy selfe, that for the whyes and howes of Gods word and truths, it is curiosity and pride to enquire of them, except God does reveale them, and we ought to mortifie our desire of knowing them: as that of our Saviour takes place in this case; *Blessed are they that beleeve and see not.*

Thirdly, Thinke with thy selfe if thou canst remember any other place or places that confirmes the truth that thou doubts of.

Fourthly, Know that that which thou art mainely to enquire of, is of the meaning of the Word of God, not of the truth of it; for we are seriously to consider whether such a place holds forth such a point, not (it appearing to be the plaine meaning of the Text) whether it be true or no, if it be a thing that thou doest not which thou should'st doe, or doest which thou should'st not doe; then seriously consider what are the reasons and grounds of this thy disobedience, and thou shalt finde them to be either the pleasure, profit, or honour of the world; and say, alas, O my soule, can we be so deceived as to be put off with vanities, such as by experience wee have knowne to be vanities, and by faith much more? Shall we leave an Heaven of joyes, the God of mercies? shall we leave Christ, who hath so loved us, that he left all, even the bosome of his Father, and emptied himselfe of all his glory, and filled himselfe with our misery? shall we leave all these for these vanities which wee must leave, and will leave us? Consider the impediments that hinder thee from doing thy duty; consider the temptations and occasions of thy sinne; consider the meanes and motives to avoyde it; remove the impediments; avoyde the occasions; use the means; and thinke of the motives to doe that which the Lord commandeth: but thou must neither thinke to finde out these, nor to use the means, or avoyde the occasions, &c. without imploring humbly and earnestly the direction and assistance of the Spirit of God, to assist and direct thee in the premisses; for you must know that you must finde out and use spirituall Motives, or else thy very avoyding of sinne is sinne, when it is done upon carnall grounds or sinfull Motives.

Tenthly, When thou hast finished all thy Meditations:

First, Thou art to entreat the Lord that he would worke all these truths upon thine heart, and fasten them as a naile in a sure place, that his Word may not be a dry breast unto thee, nor thou a barren Wildernesse unto it.

Secondly, Thou art to blesse God for any spirituall frame of heart, that is either wrought or discovered in thee by this exercise.

Lastly, Choose some speciall truth or point (in which thou art either most defective, or wherein thou hast found most relish, or which thou hast most occasion to make use of that day) and keepe it by thee to thinke of, and doe as those that walke in a garden of fragrant flowers, if one may have

have leave, generally he takes some along with him to smell to, the rest of the day; doe thou binde up some spirituall truths out of thy Meditation, and doe likewise.

Last Adv. The last great advice, and that which must serve for an Antidote, least all the other Cautions and Advises being observed, they should be turned into poyson to us, is, that wee should often meditate, and never be satisfied in our soules, untill wee come to a cleare Gospel experimentall knowledge of Christ, without which indeed we are not worthy of the name of Christians; for are we not called Christians from that very name? and doubtlesse if we have not a right knowledge of Christ, we shall make up a Christ to our selves of our prayers, and fastings, and almes, and repentance, and woe be to that soule that at the last day shall have nothing to trust to but his graces and duties, which will accuse him instead of pleading his cause: and two things especially wee should endeavour to know of Christ; first, the excellency of the person and mysteries of Christ; Secondly, the love of Christ.

First, For the excellency of his person, though to say he was both God and man, is indeed to include all; yet some few things I shall speake to manifest this point.

First, That all his people doe receive from him grace for grace, *Joh.* 1. 16. Now if we consider the vast emptinesse and spirituall wants of the people of God, we must needs conclude that he must be an Ocean of excellency that must continually supply them.

Secondly, For I shall be very briefe, setting downe rather heads of Meditation, then Sermon-wise, to dilate upon them. Consider the dignity of his sufferings, for they did satisfie the Justice of God, and that could not be satisfied without something of infinite value, and could not any save onely by reason of the dignity of his person.

Thirdly, Consider how he suffered; what did he suffer, though the paines were exceeding great, yet without any abatement at all of his love of and confidence in God; for while he satisfied the Justice of God by his passive obedience, in suffering the penalty of the Law, he also satisfied and fulfilled the righteousnesse of the Law by his active obedience, which was a wonderfull thing that in the midst of all his agony, and all his Fathers anger, while he was laying upon him the punishment of the iniquity of us all, and spared him not, that even then there should be no abatement at all of his confidence in and love of his Father, but that he should love him and trust in him as much as at any other time; for had there been any abatement, and had he not loved God then with all his soule, with all his might, and with all his strength: and the same may be said of his trusting in God, his sufferings could never have satisfied for sinne, but themselves had stood in need of forgivenesse.

Fourthly, Consider that saying of our Saviour, *Joh.* 14. 9. *He that hath seene me, hath seene the Father*: the speech of *Philip* is as if he should say; Wee indeed see a great deale of holinesse and wisedome in thy words and

actions, but would we could see the Father; surely there would be a world of holinesse and wisedome in his words and actions, if he would have lived amongst men as thou Lord hast done, surely then it had sufficed. Now our Saviours answer is as if he should say to *Philip*, If the Father himselfe had taken humane nature, and lived amongst men, he would not have spoke one word more, or otherwise, nor done one action more or otherwise then I have done, he would not, nay could not have spoke or done more wisely then I have done; *So he that hath seene me hath seene my Father.*

Fifthly, Consider that those who have had the greatest and highest revelations of divine things, have alwayes had the highest esteeme of, and have most magnified Christ. S. *Paul* rapt into the third heaven, and saw and heard things there, which was neither possible nor lawfull to be uttered, yet no man speakes higher things of Christ then he, he *desires to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; accounts all other knowledge but drosse and dogs meat; such knowledge as dogs and swine, reprobates may have; nay, one step further, the very Angells in heaven, though they have the beatificall vision, yet notwithstanding they desire to looke into the great mysteries of the Gospel, 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. Therefore never thinke that thou hast attained to any measure of Christian knowledge before thou seest an excellency in Christ, and an height and depth in the mysteries of the Gospel; which if thou shalt not doe, say within thy selfe, it is so evident that nothing is more in the Word of God; that Christ is the end of all the ceremoniall Lawes, and all the Prophesies of the old Testament; that all the Prophets, nay all the Angells give witnesse; and the Apostle cleerely says, that *there is no controversie* of this matter of the greatnesse of Gospel mysteries, and therefore that I doe not admire them, it certainly proceeds from my ignorance of them; for if it proceeded from knowledge, without doubt the Apostles that had more knowledge then I, and the Angells which had more knowledge then the Apostles, would never have desired to have knowne more of them; and after thou hast wrought this upon thy heart, and art fully convinced of the truth of it, that there is no knowledge, not onely not so profitable, but not so sweet, nor so excellent as this, then humbly beseech the Lord that he would shew unto you, teaching thee by his Spirit the deepe things of God, and that he would not onely to informe and enlighten thy understanding in, but to mannour thy will of the beauties of the mysteries of Christ: wee stand doating and gazing upon humane knowledge, which is but like a poore glow worme compared to the Sun of righteousnesse, but alas, poore thing, it hath neither light nor heat, compared to the truths of the Gospel: and we must looke upon Christ as the onely author and finisher of our faith, and justifier of our persons; though we doe all that hath been mentioned, yet we must not so much as make our doing or not doings the least ingredient in our justification: and as *Solomon* speaks concerning our wisedome, so we must doe in the matter

matter of holinesse; *Leane not to thine owne wisedome*, saith *Solomon*; not onely not rely upon it, but not *leane* on it: wee must not partly trust in our owne wisedome, and partly in the wisedome of God, but wee must wholly rely upon his wisedome; so we must not partly rely upon Christs merits, and partly upon our owne, but wholly on Christ: those sinnes which we doe not commit, we are not innocent of, and those holy duties that we doe performe, we are not innocent in, therefore neither can we escape hell, nor attaine heaven by any thing that we doe, or not doe: and the reason why we either avoyde sinne, or performe holy duties, or frequent ordinances, is not because thereby we shall be justified, but that thereby we may glorifie God and Christ, and because therein wee have communion with Christ, and are made conformable unto him, and made more capable of more of Christ: when we goe to some stately Palace, where wee have appointed to meet some deare friend, whom we love with our whole soule, though we have never so much entertainment there when we come, yet if our love and our desire to see our friend be exceeding great, wee rather weepe then rejoyce, notwithstanding the feasts and buildings which we taste and see; prayer, hearing, the Word, the Lords Supper, are stately ordinances, and rich feasts; yet if we meet not Christ there, they are but dry breasts and barren wildernesses to a soule that loves Christ.

Secondly, Now the maine thing that hinders a poore soule from coming unto Christ, is, that it is not cleerely satisfied of Christs love and willingnesse to receive her: to this point therefore by the blessing of God I shall speake more largely, and as cleerely as the Lord shall inable mee; this therefore may be said to that point; art thou not satisfied of the love and willingnesse of Christ to receive thee. What can Christ say or doe more then he hath done? suppose Christ from Heaven should bid thee write downe what expressions soever thou wouldest or couldest invent, and bid thee call all the Saints in the whole world, and all the Angells in Heaven, and bid you consult together, and write downe the highest, fullest, cleerest, and largest expressions of love, and he will set his hand and seale to them, would that satisfie, surely God and Christ have done more, for the Holy Ghost comes not short of the expressions of love of whatsoever the Angells in Heaven could invent, thou hast his hand and seale to them in his Word, thou wouldest be a looser if thou shouldest make another draught of love for Christ to set his hand to, and take that instead of the expressions of love which he hath already ratified and confirmed by his Word, his Oath, his Seale, that thou mightest have strong consolation: Suppose that thou shouldest search the whole world to finde out the fondest, lovingest, and tenderest parent in the world, and when thou hast found her, thou shouldest observe with what love, care, and bowells of affection shee carried her selfe towards her little Infant, how shee breakes her sleepe, and even her very heart when her childe is sicke, and never complaines of her paines and costs, and never thinkes shee can

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doe or suffer enough for the little Infant: now if thou shalt say within thy selfe; O that I was sure that God loved me as much as this woman loves her childe, well, would that satisfie; then be satisfied, God loves thee more. *Isa.* 49. 15. *Can a woman forget her sucking childe, that she would not have compassion on the sonne of her wombe, yea they may forget, yet will not I forget thee:* the Lord doth not say, can women, but a woman, any woman, finde out that woman which thou supposest is the most unlikely to forget her childe, yet God is more unlikely to forget thee; nay it is more possible that all the women of the world should forget their children then God; for though the question be put in the singular number, *Can a woman*; yet the answer is in the plurall, not *she may*, but *they may*, they all may. Further againe; Suppose thou wert at the solemnizing of a marriage of the lovingest couple in the whole world, and shouldest observe with how much joy and love the Bridegroome carried himselfe toward the Bride, even in the midst and height of all his nuptiall solemnities; wouldst thou not be satisfied if thou didst know that God did not onely love thee with tender love of compassion, with which the lovingest mother in the world loves her Infant, but with that love of complacencie which the Bridegroome beareth to, and with which he rejoyceth over his Bride: that his love was equall to their espousalls, then be satisfied, for God doth so; *Isa.* 62. 5. *And as a Bridegroome rejoyceth over his Bride, so shall thy God rejoyce over thee:* Nay surely I may say, that the holiest Saint in the whole world, when by the clearest discoveries of Gods love unto him, his heart is most enflamed; nay further that the highest Angell in Heaven doth not love God so much, as God loves the poorest and meanest Saint in the whole world; *for God so loved the world*, it is such a *sic*, that there is no *sicut* for it, no that of the Angells unto him; nothing can expresse it to the full, save onely the greatnesse of the gift which he out of his love gave to, and for his people, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

To conclude, doe but consider what Christ hath done, and if thou art fully satisfied of that, thou canst have no cause to have the least doubt of his willingnesse to doe whatsoever is more to be done for thee; for that which is to be done is nothing in comparison of that which he hath already done for those that are his.

First, Nothing in respect of excellency, for the Apostle brings that in, *He will much more give us all things:* also for God to give thee Christ, is much more then to give thee Heaven; as to give thee Heaven is much more then to give thee all temporall blessings, *Matth.* 6. 33. If one that ought thee ten thousand pounds, should have payd thee nine thousand nine hundred ninety-nine, thou wouldest no whit doubt but he will pay thee the residue, especially if it stood upon the forfeiture of his credit; how much more shalt thou assure thy selfe of Gods Gods doing for thee whatsoever is behinde, since he hath already done so much.

Secondly, The great matter of difficulty is over; indeed it cost Christ deare, and God the Father deare to redeeme thee; God spared not his

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owne Sonne; Christ spared not his bloud, nor his life; he suffered hunger, cold, and nakednesse, and reproach, the painfull and shamefull death of the Crosse to redeeme thee; but he lives for ever to make intercession for thee; he needs not rise off from his throne, nor put off his robes of glory to carry on the remainder of thy worke of salvation; he sits at the right hand of God to make intercession for thee; *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand untill I make thy enemies thy footstoole.*

Thirdly, The great matter of wonder is over, also that a great and mighty Monarch should marry a poore wretched and diseased Woman, is a thing of great wonder; but its not so great a wonder that having married he should make her partakers of all the glory and riches of his Kingdome; nay indeed it was a wonder if he should not. That Christ who is the Lord of glory should marry a poore sinfull soule is a wonder; but having married thee, that he should sanctifie thee, that he should present thee glorious, without spot or blemish, or any such thing, is no wonder; nay it was a wonder if he should still suffer thee to goe in rags, and never adorne thee with the Jewells of his grace, and set upon thy head the Crowne of glory were a wonder,

therefore comfort your selfe with these truths:
Now to him that hath done so much,
and much more, be glory
and honour for ever,
Amen.

FINIS.

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